



January 24, 2017

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-17-22

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Fiscal Year 2017 National Organic Initiative

Purpose: To provide guidance for administering the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) National Organic Initiative (NOI)

Expiration Date: September 30, 2017

Background

Through the EQIP NOI, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will assist eligible producers with installation of conservation practices (CPs) to treat resource concerns on agricultural operations related to organic production. The NRCS has determined that this definition includes certified organic producers and producers who are transitioning to become certified organic. Eligible applicants also include producers who fall under the exemption category in the National Organic Program (NOP) regulation.

Organic Certification Requirements

- The EQIP organic initiative self-certification worksheet for FY2017 (Attachment 1) shall be used by each producer applying for EQIP NOI assistance.
- Certified organic producers must self-certify (Attachment 1) they are a certified organic producer and provide the NRCS with a copy of their Organic System Plan (OSP) prior to application approval, and organic certification must be maintained for the life of the contract.
- When transitioning to organic, producers must self-certify (Attachment 1) that they agree to develop and implement an OSP and provide the NRCS the contact information of the applicant's U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) accredited organic certifying agent before an EQIP contract can be approved.
- Organic producers selling less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempt from organic certification. Exempt organic producers are eligible for the EQIP NOI. Applications should be ranked with transitioning producers provided that they self-certify that they agree to develop and implement an OSP.
- Payments for CPs for the NOI are limited to \$20,000 per FY and \$80,000 during the 6 rolling years of a Farm Bill.

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- Additional information about the NOP and organic certification requirements administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

Eligible Land Uses, Resource Concerns, and CPs

The eligible land uses, resource concerns, and CPs are available in Attachment 2.

The following Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) is offered as part of the NOI for transitioning to organic applications.

- Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (138)

Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Ranking Tool

The ProTracts fund code for certified organic applications and exempt organic applications is “FY17 Certified Organic.”

The ProTracts fund code for transitioning to organic applications and applications including CAP (138) is “FY17 Organic Transition.”

The ProTracts cost list is “KScountynamEQIP2017-01-EQIP.” The Toolkit cost list is “KS17_EQIP.”

National questions are consistent for all EQIP applications. Refer to Bulletin KS300-17-8—Fiscal Year 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program—Ranking Process—National Priorities, for additional information on national questions.

A copy of the state and local ranking questions are provided in Attachment 3.

Applications including a CAP will have significant ranking priority by receiving the total maximum points available in the ranking process. If application is made for a CAP, then question 1 for each of the national, state, and local ranking questions will be answered “Yes” and all remaining national, state, and local ranking questions will be answered “No.”

NOTE: CAPs require the use of a Technical Service Provider (TSP) to complete a conservation plan. See Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Section III, Conservation Activity Plans Technical Criteria, for CAP requirements.

All eligible applications shall be entered into the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI). All answers available on the CPGI report will be used to answer the corresponding question on the ProTracts Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT). The application identification number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts.

Application evaluation cut off was announced under Bulletin KS300-16-40–Fiscal Year 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program Cutoff Date. Field offices will accept applications on a continuous basis. Applications received after the cut off period will be considered during the next cut off period.

Contact: Forward all questions through established channels to Joel A. Willhoft, Resource Conservationist, at (785) 624-3127 or email joel.willhoft@ks.usda.gov.

(signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments